

CLASSIFICATION SECRET/SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Medical Facilities in Factories and Cities in USSR

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DATE OF INFO

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1. Large plants and factories have medical stations located on their grounds. The largest plants have medical stations at the main shops, and quite often, they have dispensaries of their own. The towns have municipal dispensaries or polyclinics as well as hospitals. The large cities usually have several dispensaries serving different regions of the city. In addition to the regional dispensaries in the large cities, plants in those cities may also have their own dispensaries. As far as I know, there are also public health divisions at so-called "gorodskoy soviet" (municipal soviets - councils), and at regional soviets of large cities. I believe that the municipal, regional and plant dispensaries are subordinated to those public health divisions. Local public health divisions in their turn are obviously subordinated to district public health departments, and on up to the ministries of public health of the republics and of the USSR. On the other hand, the public health division depends to a certain degree also on the local civil authorities.
2. The plant medical stations of those plants perform regular receptions of sick persons in one shift. They service only personnel of the plant where they are located.
3. Trained nurses are usually on duty every day at plant dispensaries or medical stations and at shop medical stations. As far as I know, routine sanitary inspections are made of the city or its regions at municipal and regional public health divisions or "zdravotdel", as they are often called. Physicians are on duty at the dispensaries to make outside calls to those unable to get to the dispensaries, and there are usually available ambulances ("kareta skoroy pomoschi") to handle accidents or illnesses requiring immediate medical aid. There are drugstores and sometimes pharmaceutical stores in the towns and cities which are under the supervision of the public health division or "aptekoopravleniye" (drugstores board). There are also municipal hospitals. Dispensary physicians' calls and municipal hospitals are free of charge; medicines and other medical supplies may, however, be obtained only with a charge.

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4. All medical establishments and medical facilities in the USSR are completely insufficient for the needs of the country. They are also very poorly equipped materially in all respects. Equipment and servicing of hospitals, especially in the provinces, are very often extremely poor and out-of-date. Dentist's equipment, for instance, has fallen far behind the US, and even Germany, by many years. Dentists have very few kinds of materials normally considered a minimal necessity in the US, and their tools are extremely poor and obsolete. Even in Moscow I have seen in dentist's offices only the most primitive types of dentist's drill (the pedestal type), the greater part of which are foot-driven. There is a shortage of most drugs, dressing materials and medicinals and medical implements, and there is an almost complete absence of many of them in common use elsewhere. Penicillin and sulphidine are in this latter category. Dispensaries are overloaded, and patients have to wait their turns an over-long time, even in Moscow. In the province dispensaries known to me, in spite of the fact that they operate in two shifts similar to Moscow dispensaries, over-crowding is the normal thing. A patient must first wait to receive an appointment at the registration office of the dispensary, and then must again wait many hours for the physician; as a rule, there are no preliminary appointments with doctors without first an assignment to a treating doctor. All treating doctors of a dispensary have officially-fixed quotas of patients they must receive, and normally, because of the pressure of the number of patients needing care, these fixed quotas are "surpassed". Many hours are still wasted before a patient may see a doctor. This overloading of dispensaries can be explained in the following manner:
 - (a) There is a real shortage of dispensaries and doctors in comparison with the number of patients needing medical attention;
 - (b) Dispensaries are required to issue and to control sick leaves.

Severe laws regulating sick leaves, their control and the procedure of legalizing sick leaves are in existence in the USSR. These same laws also determine the responsibility of medical personnel for any violations. The so-called "bolnichny list" (sick leave document) is the only document which legally certifies a sick leave. These documents are legal only if issued by physicians authorized to do so; consequently, under conditions of forced labor, with a very high quota of illness requiring temporary release from work, this obligation consumes considerable time, a situation which requires most of the time of the majority of the physicians. Also due to this system, an enormous amount of otherwise productive time is totally wasted by the patients, which, under conditions existing in other countries is spent in rest and useful labor.

5. Private doctors are almost unknown in the USSR. In order to suppress private initiative on the part of doctors, the Soviet Government has made it obligatory for doctors to work at state public health establishments and has established extremely high rates of taxation on private practice, as well as numerous other measures.
6. Apart from municipal, regional and plant dispensaries and hospitals, private dispensaries and hospitals requiring fees do exist, however, chiefly in the large cities. In comparison with the state public health institutions, however, this system services many times less the number of patients; in overall figures, that is, taking into consideration the whole country rather than the cities alone, the number served by the private institutions is insignificantly small. Service in the private medical establishments is far superior to the public health establishments, not only because there is a fee but also because it is usually a very high fee. I believe that dispensaries requiring payment have no authority to issue "sick leave documents."
7. In summary, the USSR public health system suffers from insufficient capacity and equipment in the hospitals, especially in the hospitals in the provinces; and from lack of modern equipment. Illustrative of this is the case of amputees, of which there were many in the USSR during World War II and after. Judging from their appearances and from what was said by the amputees themselves and their relatives, they sought prostheses for arms or legs for years before getting them, and when they did get them, they were of such unsatisfactory quality to often hinder normal use.

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